

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0301

February 26, 2018

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

I write to encourage you to fully fund the Bureau of Indian Education's New School Replacement Program. Additionally, I support your efforts to direct the Bureau of Indian Education and the Department of the Interior to work with tribal nations to develop innovative approaches to replace those schools not currently on the Bureau's priority list for replacement in a timely fashion.

As you may know, the schools on the program's priority list are in the direst need of repair and, in some cases, are considered beyond repair. Currently, 10 schools have been promised new construction, but they have not yet received it. Addressing the needs of these schools is only a start as there are an additional 68 schools eligible for replacement. Not only do we have a moral obligation to address the condition of these schools, we have treaty and trust obligations to do so.

As you are aware, the United States has an obligation to meet the basic needs of Native American communities. These commitments explicitly provide for education. I believe that for the United States to fulfill our responsibility to Native American tribes and nations, we must ensure that children living in these communities have access to healthy, safe, and comfortable schools. When reviewing your requests, I hope that you will take this trust and treaty responsibility seriously.

While I am aware that you must balance a wide array of funding needs and must make difficult choices due to budget constraints, I hope you will consider this request with extra care. A quality education will allow these students to have a strong future. I believe that a student's zip code should not play a role in their educational opportunities, which is exactly why we must ensure that the Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools in poor condition are replaced in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress